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Letter dated 27 April 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

During the course of the last conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel, a number of incidents occurred between 8 July and 26 August 2014 affecting or involving United Nations personnel, premises and operations.

In my capacity as the Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization, I decided to establish a United Nations Headquarters board of inquiry to review and investigate 10 of those incidents, in which death or injuries occurred at, or damage was done to, United Nations premises, or in which the presence of weaponry was reported at those premises.

My aim in taking this step was to develop a clear record of the facts of those serious incidents and their causes and to determine the persons or entities to which they might be attributable. That would make it possible for me, inter alia, to identify any gaps that there might have been in the Organization's procedures and to take any measures and put in place any arrangements that might be needed, with a view to preventing a recurrence of such incidents in the future, or at least to mitigate their effects. It would also put me in a better position to determine what steps I might need to take to protect the Organization's property and assets.

I would emphasize in this connection that a board of inquiry is not a judicial body or court of law; it does not make legal findings and does not consider questions of legal liability.

I appointed Mr. Patrick Cammaert as head of the Board. The other Board members were Ms. Maria Vicien-Milburn, Mr. Pierre Lemelin, Mr. K. C. Reddy and Ms. Lee O'Brien (who resigned from the Board for medical reasons on 29 December 2014). Mr. Stephane Wohlfarht served as Secretary.

The Board was convened on 10 November 2014. It conducted a field visit from 26 November to 13 December 2014 and submitted its report to me on 5 February 2015. I would like to thank the Board for having concluded its work successfully. In doing so, I recognize the difficulties that it naturally faced in obtaining clear and reliable evidence concerning precisely what happened in each of the incidents that it was tasked to investigate, those incidents occurring, as they did, in a situation of armed conflict and, in some but not all cases, in close proximity to where intense fighting was taking place.

I wish to place on record my appreciation for the cooperation provided to the Board by the Government of Israel, including its facilitation of the entry of the Board to the Gaza Strip and the convening of extensive meetings with the Board. I also appreciate the reception of the Board by representatives of the State of Palestine and the meetings with the local authorities in Gaza. I share the appreciation of the Board members for the cooperation extended to them by United Nations officials and entities on the ground. I welcome the efforts of the Government of Israel in establishing criminal investigations into certain incidents that occurred during the conflict, including some of those falling within the scope of the Board's terms of reference. I hope that the Government of Palestine will also conduct examinations into possible criminal activity during the conflict. Swift investigations must be undertaken, in accordance with international standards.

As with all United Nations boards of inquiry, the Board's report is an internal document and is not for public release. It contains significant amounts of information that was shared with the Board in strict confidence. It also contains a significant body of information the disclosure of which could prejudice the security or proper conduct of the Organization's operations or activities.

At the same time, I am aware that my decision to establish a board of inquiry into certain of the incidents that occurred in the Gaza Strip has given rise to considerable interest. In view of this fact and the seriousness of the events, I have taken the decision to release a summary of the Board's report, which is annexed to the present letter.

I wish to emphasize that the annexed document is a summary of the Board's report and not the report itself. The difficulties in obtaining evidence notwithstanding, the report runs to some 207 pages with footnotes detailing relevant sources and citations and is accompanied by some 160 annexes and appendices containing relevant evidence, including witness statements, investigative reports, including on weaponry, medical reports, photographs, video footage, audio recordings, submissions of non-governmental organizations, meeting notes and other materials.

I would also emphasize that the annexed document is the Secretariat's summary of the Board's report and that it has not been prepared by the Board. It contains a faithful and objective reflection of the Board's full report, including a description of the circumstances relating to each of the 10 incidents that the Board was tasked to review and investigate, together with a summary of the Board's key findings on the facts of each of those incidents, on its causes and on the persons or entity to which it is attributable. It also contains a summary of the Board's conclusions. The recommendations to me are reproduced in full from the Board's report.

With regard to the Board's recommendations concerning communication and coordination and safety and security, as well as the first of its two general recommendations, I have decided to establish an ad hoc group of senior managers, consisting of the Under-Secretaries-General for Political Affairs, Legal Affairs and Safety and Security, to carefully review these recommendations and advise me on what courses of action I should take.

With regard to the second of the Board's two general recommendations, I have already initiated actions with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and relevant United Nations departments aimed

at providing counselling to affected staff to address potential post-traumatic stress disorder.

Regarding the seven incidents in which death or injuries occurred at, or damage was done to, United Nations premises, I deplore the fact that at least 44 Palestinians were killed as a result of Israeli actions and at least 227 injured at United Nations premises being used as emergency shelters. United Nations premises are inviolable and should be places of safety, in particular in a situation of armed conflict. It is a matter of the utmost gravity that those who looked to them for protection and who sought and were granted shelter there had their hopes and trust denied. I will work with all concerned and spare no effort to ensure that such incidents will never be repeated.

Concerning the discovery by the United Nations of weaponry on United Nations premises, I am dismayed that Palestinian militant groups would put United Nations schools at risk by using them to hide their arms. The three schools at which weaponry was found were empty at the time and were not being used as shelters. However, the fact that they were used by those involved in the fighting to store their weaponry and, in two cases, probably to fire from is unacceptable. It serves to undermine the confidence that all concerned should have that United Nations premises are civilian objects and may therefore not be made the object of attack. I am determined to take the necessary steps towards ensuring that there is no repetition of any such incident in the future, whether in times of armed conflict or not.

Above all, I intend, as and where appropriate, to address further issues arising from the incidents that were the subject of the Board's report through dialogue with the Governments of Israel and Palestine.

In conclusion, I note that this is the second time during my tenure as Secretary-General that I have been obliged to establish a board of inquiry into incidents involving United Nations premises and personnel in Gaza that occurred during the course of tragic conflicts in the Gaza Strip. The implementation of recommendations of the 2009 Board of Inquiry, especially in the area of coordination and communication, certainly contributed to the implementation of improved protocols and procedures during the crisis in 2014. However, the recent crisis has brought about new challenges that need to be addressed and I intend to do so in the follow-up to the Board's report. In particular, I remain concerned for the security and safety of United Nations personnel working in Gaza, in particular, should a new crisis develop. In this regard, I wish to reiterate my profound appreciation to the Organization's staff for their relentless efforts on the ground during the recent conflict, 11 of whom paid the ultimate price.

Once again, I must stress my profound and continuing concern for the civilian population of the Gaza Strip and Israel and their right to live in peace and security, free from the threat of violence and terrorism. It remains of the greatest importance that the parties ensure that innocent civilians do not become victims of hostilities. The agony of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, and the tragic, decades-long predicament that they endure there, is reflected in the report of the Board of Inquiry. We should also bear in mind that Israeli civilians in southern Israel continue to face the threat of rocket and terrorist attacks by Hamas and other militant groups.

Despite recent events, it is still my belief that the well-being and aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis will best be secured through a successful peace process that achieves the goals of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council, including its resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009).

I would be grateful if you could bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council for their information.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

Annex

Summary by the Secretary-General of the report of the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry into certain incidents that occurred in the Gaza Strip between 8 July 2014 and 26 August 2014

1. On 10 November 2014, I convened a United Nations Headquarters board of inquiry to review and investigate the following incidents affecting schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) that occurred in the Gaza Strip between 8 July 2014 and 26 August 2014:

(a) Injuries occurring at and damage done to UNRWA Maghazi Preparatory Girls "A/B" School on 21 and 22 July 2014;

(b) Injury occurring at and damage done to UNRWA Deir El Balah Preparatory Girls "C" School on 23 July 2014;

(c) Deaths and injuries occurring at and damage done to UNRWA Beit Hanoun Elementary Co-educational "A" and "D" School on 24 July 2014;

(d) Injuries occurring at and damage done to Zaitoun Preparatory Girls "B" School on the night of 28/29 July 2014;

(e) Deaths and injuries occurring at and damage done to UNRWA Jabalia Elementary Girls "A" and "B" School on 30 July 2014;

(f) Deaths and injuries occurring at and/or in the immediate vicinity of and damage done to UNRWA Rafah Preparatory Boys "A" School on 3 August 2014;

(g) Damage done to UNRWA Khuza'a Elementary College Co-educational "A" and "B" School between 17 July and 26 August 2014;

(h) Presence of weaponry at UNRWA Gaza Beach Elementary Co-educational "B" School on 16 July 2014;

(i) Presence of weaponry at UNRWA Jabalia Elementary "C" and Ayyobiya Boys School on 22 July 2014;

(j) Presence of weaponry at UNRWA Nuseirat Preparatory Co-educational "B" School on 29 July 2014 and on 17 August 2014.

2. The Board was headed by Major General (retired) Patrick Cammaert, a former Military Adviser in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. It also comprised Ms. Maria Vicien-Milburn, a former General Counsel of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Ms. Lee O'Brien, a former Senior Political Officer in the Department of Political Affairs (Ms. O'Brien resigned from the Board for medical reasons on 29 December 2014); Mr. Pierre Lemelin, United Nations Mine Action Service Programme Manager in Côte d'Ivoire and a former Chief Ammunition Technical Officer in the Canadian Forces; and Mr. Kovvurichina Reddy, a former Chief of Security for a number of United Nations field presences.

3. As set out in its terms of reference, the detailed tasks of the Board were:

(a) To gather and review all available investigation reports and other relevant source materials, including any available reports from national investigations;

(b) To identify and interview relevant witnesses and others who can help the investigation and make a record of their statements;

(c) To visit the sites where the incidents occurred;

(d) To produce a Headquarters report on the incidents including:

(i) Findings on the facts and circumstances related to the incidents (to include the full names of the deceased and injured persons and the dates, times, places of deaths or injuries; if these persons were United Nations personnel, whether they were on duty at the time of the incidents or, if these persons were not United Nations personnel, the reason for their presence at or in the vicinity of the scene of the incident; descriptions of losses of and damage to property of the United Nations and of the deceased and injured persons; and, in the case of incidents (h) to (j), the nature, state and location of the weaponry);

(ii) Findings on the causes of the incidents;

(iii) Findings on the attributability of the incidents to any individuals or entities;

(iv) Recommendations concerning any action that, in the opinion of the team, should be taken by the United Nations, including any actions or measures that should be taken to avoid recurrence of such incidents;

(v) Relevant evidence, to be added as appendices and annexes, including photographs, post-mortem reports and so on.

4. As is standard practice for United Nations boards of inquiry, the Board was directed not to include in its report any findings of law or any recommendations regarding compensation, disciplinary action or legal liability.

5. In its report, the Board noted that it was not within its terms of reference to address the wider aspects of the conflict in Gaza, its causes or the situation affecting the civilian populations of Gaza and Israel in the period before Operation Protective Edge was launched. Its task was limited to considering the 10 incidents identified in its terms of reference.

Position of the Government of Israel on Operation Protective Edge

6. The Government of Israel provided background information to the Board regarding Operation Protective Edge. The operation had taken place in several phases: an initial air campaign from 8 July to 17 July, which was supplemented from 17 July to 5 August by a ground operation following an attack by militants inside Israel on 17 July carried out by means of a tunnel from inside Gaza, the launch of an unmanned aerial vehicle into Israeli airspace, an attempted infiltration by sea into Israel by Hamas naval commandos, continued rocket fire from Gaza and Hamas' refusal to accept a ceasefire. The operation had two objectives: to destroy the rocket arsenal in Gaza and to neutralize the "attack tunnels" leading into Israeli territory, the latter being the focus of the ground operation.

7. The Government highlighted the complexities of carrying out military operations in urban environments. It stated that Hamas had been better prepared and armed than at the time of Operation Cast Lead in 2009 and Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012. It had pre-positioned weapons and military equipment and

prepared fighting positions in various locations to allow fighters to move freely without carrying weapons and to blend into the civilian population. Mosques, schools, hospitals and other civilian objects had been used to embed rockets, weapons caches and command centres. These conditions made it difficult for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to distinguish "enemy" forces and activity from the civilian population, while the limited visual and communications contact with "friendly" forces decentralized the decision-making capacity of the higher command, with the consequence that junior commanders were required to make decisions in real time under fire.

8. The Government stated that the objectives of instructions issued by IDF to troops had been, inter alia, to ensure compliance with the law of armed conflict and minimize harm to civilians and sensitive sites. It stated that those instructions were more stringent regarding the use of force than international humanitarian law required. Legal advice was also integrated into IDF activities both in operational planning and in real time. Such advice was binding and generally could not be overridden by operational commanders. The Government further stated that there had been specific and separate directives for the approval of predetermined and time-critical targets, for operations around sensitive sites and for safety ranges relating to civilian objects. Targeting processes had been improved on the basis of lessons learned from previous operations in Gaza.

9. The Government identified the following specific measures that had been taken by IDF to minimize harm to civilians: reliance on intelligence; selective choice of weapons and ammunition, including the use of precision-guided missiles; marking sensitive sites on command and control systems and on maps available to forces operating on the ground; and the issuance of general and specific warnings to the civilian population and to specific persons or officials. IDF would cancel attacks or divert missiles if potential harm to civilians could be identified.

10. Specifically with regard to United Nations premises, the Government stated that it had routinely updated the location of all such premises on the IDF command and control system and coordination maps and had issued special and restrictive rules for engaging targets that would affect them. On the basis of lessons learned from previous operations in Gaza, IDF had attempted to provide early warnings of possible attacks in the vicinity of United Nations premises, quickly and thoroughly investigated incidents involving death and injuries at or damage to those premises and provided warnings of abuses of them, as possible.

United Nations premises

11. On 11 July 2014, the United Nations Special Coordinator and the UNRWA Commissioner-General jointly addressed a letter to the Minister of Defence of Israel, attaching an updated list of all United Nations facilities in Gaza as well as their coordinates. The schools involved in the incidents enumerated in the Board's terms of reference were included in that list.

12. In their joint letter, the United Nations Special Coordinator and the UNRWA Commissioner-General warned that, in case of displacement resulting from military operations, some United Nations installations could be used to shelter civilians. They also stated that they relied on the cooperation of the Minister of Defence to protect United Nations operations, personnel and premises, which had to remain

inviolable in accordance with applicable international law, including the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946.

13. UNRWA sent twice-daily communications to the Israeli Coordinator of the Government Activities in the Territories and the Coordination and Liaison Administration, informing them of the Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates of premises currently being used as designated emergency shelters. All the UNRWA schools involved in the incidents enumerated in the Board's terms of reference were included in those communications. In its communications to the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories and the Coordination and Liaison Administration, UNRWA consistently recalled the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and reminded the Israeli authorities that they were obligated to respect the inviolability of the premises of the United Nations, including those of UNRWA, and to ensure the protection and security of its personnel, installations and property. UNRWA also reminded the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories and the Coordination and Liaison Administration of the requirement that IDF must take all actions necessary to prevent any damage to United Nations facilities and threats to the safety and security of United Nations personnel.

Findings of the Board on the causes of the incidents and their attribution

14. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Board describes in detail in its report the on-site visits that it conducted during its stay in Gaza and its interviews with staff of the Organization, including UNRWA staff, as well as with relevant authorities and witnesses who could assist in its investigation. The Board refers to a number of investigative reports and other relevant source materials regarding the incidents as well as to information provided by the Government of Israel.

15. The Board reached the following conclusions regarding the facts, causes and attribution of each of the incidents enumerated in its terms of reference. Complete findings of fact, together with supporting evidence and documentation and the rationale for the Board's conclusions, are contained in the Board's full report, which was submitted to the Secretary-General in strict confidence, in accordance with its terms of reference and consistent with standard practice for United Nations boards of inquiry.

Incident (a): Injuries occurring at and damage done to UNRWA Maghazi Preparatory Girls "A/B" School on 21 and 22 July 2014

16. UNRWA Maghazi Preparatory Girls "A/B" school is located within the Maghazi refugee camp, in the Middle Governorate of the Gaza Strip. It is situated 2 km from Israel and within the 3 km "buffer zone" that was created by IDF during Operation Protective Edge. The school is gated and surrounded by a high wall.

17. On 19 July 2014, IDF issued messages to the residents of the Maghazi refugee camp asking them to evacuate to Deir Al Balah, further south-west. On the same day, the school opened as a designated emergency shelter, with possibly as many as 2,000 persons sheltering there at some point as, despite shelling in the area from 19 to 21 July, people came to the school thinking that it would remain a safe place.

18. On 21 July, the security situation in the Maghazi refugee camp deteriorated rapidly, with shelling increasing in the vicinity of the school. UNRWA management

advised that persons seeking shelter there should be instructed to abandon the school and relocate to another school about 5 km away. By the time of the incident, most had done so, but up to 300 people remained. At about 1650 hours, the school was struck at roof level by direct fire from an IDF tank, likely involving a 120 mm high-explosive anti-tank multipurpose or high explosive projectile. Injuries were caused to a man and a child sheltering at the school and the school premises were damaged. The Board noted that timely action by UNRWA management and the shelter manager in informing persons sheltering at the school that it was no longer safe and asking them to relocate to an alternative site had prevented further injuries and perhaps deaths.

19. The Board noted that none of the witnesses who had testified to UNRWA had been aware of any activity by militant groups in the school or in its vicinity. The Board further noted that it appeared that the school gate was guarded at all times by UNRWA guards and was closed at night and that all persons who entered the school were registered. The Government of Israel, on the other hand, informed the Board that IDF had identified significant enemy presence in the area around, and apparently also within, the school. The Government further informed the Board that the incident was under examination at the request of the Military Advocate General, that IDF infantry and armoured units had been engaged in military activity approximately 1 km south of the school at the time of the incident and that it was suspected that the school had been hit by 120 mm tank ammunition.

20. Later in the day of 21 July, UNRWA removed the school from its list of designated emergency shelters. In the morning of 22 July 2014, UNRWA and IDF coordinated a two-hour window to allow safe passage for an UNRWA team to visit the school and investigate the previous day's incident. The team arrived at the school during that period. They were in clearly marked United Nations vehicles and parked in full view in the middle of the school courtyard. One member of the team, wearing a vest with a luminescent United Nations insignia, went to the roof to examine the previous day's strike. While he was there, two mortar rounds hit buildings in close proximity to the school. The team member ran from the roof. Two further mortar rounds then struck the roof of the school at the exact location where he had been standing. The UNRWA team immediately evacuated the area. No injuries resulted from this incident, but the school was damaged.

21. The Government of Israel informed the Board that, as a result of the examination that had been initiated at the request of the Military Advocate General, it had been found that, on 22 July, IDF was engaged in mortar fire in the area of Maghazi, but that all fire was directed at open areas at least 2 km away. Moreover, IDF munitions experts who had examined photographs of a fragment of a mortar round that had been collected by UNRWA at the scene of the incident had been unable to determine whether it was a remnant of an IDF 81 mm mortar round as opposed, for example, to an 82 mm round, a weapon that, it was said, was used by Hamas. Such determination would require physical examination of the remnant. The Board found, however, that the school had been hit by 81 mm mortar rounds fired by IDF.

Incident (b): Injury occurring at and damage done to UNRWA Deir El Balah Preparatory Girls "C" School on 23 July 2014

22. UNRWA Deir El Balah Preparatory Girls "C" School is located in an urban area in the Middle Governorate of the Gaza Strip. The school has one gate and is protected by a high wall. The school was opened as a designated emergency shelter on 19 July. At the time of the incident, some 1,500 displaced persons were sheltering there.

23. The Board was informed that IDF had conducted operations around the area of the Middle Governorate of Gaza during the night of 22 to 23 July 2014, that air strikes had been carried out by the Israeli Air Force on targets in Deir El Balah camp and that heavy clashes had taken place to the east of Deir El Balah throughout the night. The Board noted that witnesses had testified to UNRWA that, during the night, they could hear shelling in the area, but not near the school. It also noted that witnesses had testified to UNRWA that there was no militant activity in or around the school at the time of the incident. The Board was further informed that UNRWA had put security measures in place to ensure that no armed persons entered the school.

24. Between 0545 and 0615 hours on the morning of 23 July, the medical isolation room on the third floor of the school was hit by a projectile, which passed through a window and two walls of an elevator shaft, partially striking the external veranda wall before exiting the school grounds. Three displaced persons among the approximately 40 persons sleeping in the room at the time of the incident suffered light injuries. No one was killed. There was relatively minor damage to the school.

25. The Government of Israel informed the Board that the incident was under examination further to a request by the Military Advocate General and that it had not been possible to identify any IDF operations that could be connected to the incident. The Board found, however, that the school had been hit by direct fire from IDF, using a 120 mm high-explosive anti-tank projectile.

Incident (c): Deaths and injuries occurring at and damage done to UNRWA Beit Hanoun Elementary Co-educational "A" and "D" School on 24 July 2014

26. UNRWA Beit Hanoun Elementary Co-educational "A" and "D" School is located in Beit Hanoun town. Portions of Beit Hanoun, including the school, fell within the so-called "buffer zone" that was created by IDF during Operation Protective Edge. During the operation, the area surrounding the school was particularly dangerous and, as hostilities intensified, the entire area was exposed to fierce combat. As a result of the mass displacement of civilians and their need for shelter, UNRWA designated the school an emergency shelter on 18 July.

27. The Board noted that most witnesses had testified that shelling in the vicinity of the school was a daily occurrence and that some of the residents of the school were injured by shrapnel from the shelling outside the school. The Board also noted that an UNRWA security official had testified to having received multiple calls from the Israeli Coordination and Liaison Administration during the three or four days prior to the incident indicating that, according to IDF, rockets were being fired from and around the school and that it needed to be evacuated. On the other hand, the Board noted that witnesses interviewed by UNRWA had said that there was no

militant activity either inside or in the near vicinity of the school, although the launching of rockets from areas further away could be heard.

28. The Board noted that the school is enclosed by a high wall and has one gate, which was watched by at least one guard and closed at night. In the period prior to the incident, UNRWA was sometimes unable to provide food, water and other supplies to the school because of lack of authorization by IDF. Residents of the school would therefore be obliged to obtain their own supplies by going to their homes or asking others to go out to buy them. The Board noted that residents had testified that, to this end, they had opened two holes in the school wall. There was evidence that these holes had been closed with desks and tables on the night prior to the incident.

29. On the day prior to the incident, the situation around the school worsened. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited the school in an attempt to evacuate it, but the majority of the residents refused to leave. That night, witnesses described shelling in the vicinity of the school, projecting shrapnel into the school, and gunfire hitting the school. The UNRWA Gaza Field Office received calls from IDF indicating that they would target the school and that the displaced persons should be evacuated.

30. In the morning of 24 July, military activity appeared to have de-escalated and many of the residents chose to leave. As a result, the number of residents in the school had decreased by the time of the incident from the 2,000-4,000 who had been there earlier to approximately 450 people. That same morning, UNRWA decided to evacuate its staff from the school, in view of the risk of an imminent attack by IDF. UNRWA contacted the Coordination and Liaison Administration and repeatedly requested that a window of opportunity be granted for that purpose. No such opportunity had been granted by the time the incident took place. An attempt was made by UNRWA to persuade the residents of the school to leave, but they said that they would remain. UNRWA called the Coordination and Liaison Administration, stating that UNRWA would not be evacuating the residents and recalling that the school was a civilian object.

31. The same morning, the UNRWA Gaza Field Office received a call from an IDF field commander indicating that IDF were going to target a cluster of four other schools in Beit Hanoun, 800 m away from Elementary Co-educational "A" and "D" School. The field commander said that they were sitting on a Hamas arsenal and that UNRWA should evacuate any people who were in the schools. The CLA Coordination and Liaison Administration also contacted local officials in Beit Hanoun and told them to prepare the residents of Elementary Co-educational "A" and "D" School for evacuation. At 1400 hours, an employee of the municipality, who was also a *mukhtar*, arrived at the school, together with another *mukhtar*. He told the remaining residents that the school was not safe and that, with the cooperation of ICRC and UNRWA, they would arrange for buses to evacuate the residents. The residents then went to the schoolyard to await evacuation and the guards opened the gate in anticipation.

32. At approximately 1500 hours on 24 July, the school was hit by indirect artillery fire. At least two 120 mm high-explosive mortar projectiles struck the school, one hitting the middle of the schoolyard and a second hitting the steps in front of the school's entrance. Between 12 and 14 residents were killed and 93 injured, some

severely. No major damage was done to the school. The Board found that the incident was attributable to IDF.

33. The Government of Israel stated that the Coordination and Liaison Administration had made extensive attempts via UNRWA and ICRC to evacuate the school in order to minimize the risk of incidental harm to civilians as a result of the intensive fighting in the area. It also stated that the school had not been the object of the attack. It further informed the Board that, as a result of fact-finding carried out by IDF, there existed "grounds for a reasonable suspicion that the incident involved a deviation from IDF regulations" and that the Military Advocate General had ordered a criminal investigation into the incident.

Incident (d): Injuries occurring at and damage done to Zaitoun Preparatory Girls "B" School on the night of 28/29 July 2014

34. UNRWA Zaitoun Preparatory Girls "B" School is located in a densely built-up neighbourhood of Gaza city, near the UNRWA headquarters compound. The school was opened as a designated emergency shelter on 19 July. By the evening of 27 July, it was sheltering some 1,700 persons. The Board noted that the UNRWA school guard had testified that there were no militants or unregistered people inside the school. Guards were present at all times at the gate of the school, which was locked at night with entry and exit prohibited.

35. There was intense artillery shelling and air bombardment throughout 28 July in Gaza Governorate. In the evening, the shelling gained in intensity in the immediate vicinity of the school, where militant activity was also noted. On 29 July, at approximately 0130 hours, a projectile struck the roof of the school, penetrating the ceiling and striking the wall immediately adjacent to the door of a classroom in which approximately 40 people were sleeping. Seven residents were injured and damage was caused to the school.

36. The Government of Israel stated that an examination of the incident had been requested by the Military Advocate General and that it was ongoing. It had not been possible to identify any IDF operational activity on the date in question that could be connected to the incident, including any aerial strike on the school or in its vicinity. IDF munitions experts had also been unable to determine, from the photographic evidence available, the type of munition that had hit the school. The Board found, however, that the school had been hit by a missile, possibly a "Spike" missile, launched from the air by IDF.

Incident (e): Deaths and injuries occurring at and damage done to UNRWA Jabalia Elementary Girls "A" and "B" School on 30 July 2014

37. UNRWA Jabalia Elementary Girls "A" and "B" School is located in a heavily built-up area in the centre of the Jabalia refugee camp. The school opened as a designated emergency shelter on 16 July 2014. By 30 July, it had approximately 3,000 registered residents, most of them from the towns of Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun, Jabalia and other areas in northern Gaza.

38. The school is enclosed by a 3 m-high wall and has only one gate. Two UNRWA school attendants were looking after the school, one working the day shift and the other the night shift. Guards hired as part of the UNRWA Job Creation Programme stayed awake throughout the night to monitor the school and ensure that

residents abided by the rules. Weapons were prohibited inside the school and witness testimony appeared to the Board to confirm that that rule was strictly observed. The Board noted that it appeared from witness testimony that there were two guards at the school gate at all times as well as additional guards within the school to maintain security and ensure that armed individuals did not enter. It also appeared from witness testimony that the gate was closed at night and that no one was seen climbing the school wall, including on the night before, and the morning of, the incident.

39. In the weeks and days prior to the incident, there were several incidents of shelling by IDF of buildings in the vicinity of the school. In the days prior to the incident, armed clashes between militants and IDF took place in the east of the Jabalia camp and IDF dropped leaflets requesting residents to move to Gaza city. The Board noted that witnesses interviewed by UNRWA had stated that there was no militant activity in the school or in its close vicinity, although one person stated that she had heard rockets not far from the school in the days before the incident.

40. The Board noted that most witnesses had testified to UNRWA that the hours before the incident were relatively calm. However, at some time between 0430 and 0445 hours in the morning of 30 July, an explosion occurred outside the school, projecting shrapnel into the schoolyard. At approximately 0445 hours, the school was hit by a barrage of four 155 mm high-explosive projectiles, an artillery indirect fire weapon. Between 17 and 18 people were killed, including an UNRWA staff member and two of his sons and a guard hired by UNRWA under its Job Creation Programme. Ninety-nine residents of the shelter suffered injuries. Very significant damage was done to the school. Injuries were also caused to persons and animals and buildings in the immediate vicinity of the school were damaged. The Board found that the incident was attributable to the actions of IDF and that no prior warning had been given by the Government of Israel of the firing of 155 mm high-explosive projectiles on, or in the surrounding area of, the school.

41. The Government of Israel stated that 155 mm shells had been fired at military targets and that the school had not been the object of the attack. The Military Advocate General had ordered a criminal investigation into the incident.

Incident (f): Deaths and injuries occurring at and/or in the immediate vicinity of and damage done to UNRWA Rafah Preparatory Boys "A" School on 3 August 2014

42. UNRWA Rafah Preparatory Boys "A" School is located in the densely populated city of Rafah, on the southern tip of the Gaza Strip. A wall encloses the school and there is only one main gate, accessed from a busy street. The school was designated as an emergency shelter for civilians on 18 July 2014 and was sheltering approximately 2,700-2,900 persons on the day of the incident.

43. The Board noted that witnesses had described the situation in the area of the school in the morning of 3 August 2014 as calm, when they suddenly heard a drone. An undetermined number of civilians, including street vendors who had set up stalls, were standing next to the school gate, which had just opened to allow an UNRWA vehicle to enter the premises. Between 1040 and 1045 hours, a precision-guided missile, launched from the air by IDF, struck the road outside the school, 5-6 m from the gate. Fifteen persons who were in the vicinity of the gate at the time were killed, including a guard hired by UNRWA under its Job Creation Programme

who was inside the school compound at the time. Between 25 and 30 people who were in the vicinity of the gate were injured. The school wall and the guards' container by the school gate suffered minor damage from shrapnel. The Board found that the missile had been directed at a motorcycle carrying three individuals.

44. The Government of Israel stated to the Board that an examination of the incident was being undertaken at the request of the Military Advocate General. IDF had fired an aerial-launched missile at the motorcycle, which had been carrying three militants belonging to Palestinian Islamic Jihad. By the time it became apparent that the strike would coincide with the moment the motorcycle would pass by the school gate, it was no longer possible to divert the missile.

Incident (g): Damage done to UNRWA Khuza'a Elementary College Co-educational "A" and "B" School between 17 July and 26 August 2014

45. UNRWA Khuza'a Elementary College Co-educational "A" and "B" School is located in a residential area in the middle of the farming village of Khuza'a, about 1.3 km from Israel. The school was not used as an emergency shelter during Operation Protective Edge. However, as was the case concerning the other schools involved in the incidents that were the subject of the Board's inquiry, UNRWA had informed the Israeli authorities of the school's location and its status as a United Nations facility. The Board noted that the school buildings had been locked at the start of Operation Protective Edge and that no civilians were present at the time of the incident.

46. IDF ground troops entered the village of Khuza'a on or around 23 July. There appears to have been heavy shelling and clashes between IDF and militants in the area after that date. On or around 28 July, one block of the school — block A — was entirely demolished. On or around the same date, a 120 mm high-explosive anti-tank projectile hit another block of the school — block D — causing extensive damage.

47. The Government of Israel stated to the Board that an examination of the incident had been undertaken at the request of the Military Advocate General. Throughout the fighting in Khuza'a, IDF commanders on the ground had received numerous indications that the school compound was being used as an observation post and a command and control centre. On the night of 27 July, IDF forces had accordingly positioned themselves in a nearby structure and, to ensure that that structure functioned as an adequate defensive position and thus would provide sufficient force protection from a range of potential threats, several of the surrounding structures, including part of the school, were demolished. On 28 July, an IDF detachment entered the school to search the buildings for enemy presence and found a Palestinian Islamic Jihad operational map and other military equipment. In the course of the search, the commander on the ground decided, for imperative reasons of military necessity, to clear an additional area of structures that were part of the school compound to improve the force protection of IDF. The forces that searched the school did not employ any gunfire or explosives and the damage to block D was unlikely to have been the result of a hit from a 120 mm tank shell.

48. The Board found that block A of the school had been demolished by IDF bulldozers and that block D had been damaged as a result of the impact of a 120 mm high-explosive anti-tank projectile fired by an IDF tank.

Incident (h): Presence of weaponry at UNRWA Gaza Beach Elementary Co-educational "B" School on 16 July 2014

49. Gaza Beach Elementary Co-educational "B" School is located in the heart of the Beach refugee camp, in the midst of a densely populated area of Gaza city. Four other UNRWA schools and an UNRWA health centre are located on the opposite side of the street. The school buildings are enclosed by a wall and there is one main gate. On two of its four sides, the schoolyard is surrounded by houses, which are built on the school's boundary wall. The lower floors of those houses have windows opening on to the schoolyard; one house connects with the schoolyard through a gate. Also next to the school, adjacent to the house with the connecting gate, is a private building whose main gate is located next to the school gate. That house was bombed during Operation Protective Edge, prior to the incident.

50. Because of the summer vacation, the school was not in use at the time of Operation Protective Edge, nor was it used as a designated emergency shelter.

51. The Board was informed that two UNRWA school attendants were looking after the school prior to and on the day of the incident. One worked the morning shift and the other the afternoon shift. Five guards hired as part of the UNRWA Job Creation Programme were also assigned to the school, one working the morning shift and the other four sharing the night shift in pairs. In addition, the school principal inspected all the classrooms on some days.

52. The Board was informed that one of the school attendants had testified that he had performed his normal duties prior to and on the day of the incident. The other had testified that, for safety reasons, he was told to stay away from the school and to relocate to the health centre across the street and watch the school from there. Prior to and on the day of the incident, the Job Creation Programme guards were also not present at the school but at the health centre, in accordance with the same instruction. The Board was informed that an UNRWA official had issued this instruction for fear that the building next door to the school would be shelled again.

53. The Board was informed that the school gate was unlocked during the period leading up to the incident in order to allow children access to the schoolyard. It was also informed that there were two sets of keys to the classrooms, one for the morning shift and the other for the afternoon. One set of keys was kept in the school principal's office. It was unclear where the other set was kept.

54. A team of Operations Support Officers had inspected the school on 2 June as part of a regular inspection programme for all UNRWA facilities, designed to prevent breaches of their "neutrality". No weapons or signs of militant activity were reported by the team during that inspection. No further inspections were conducted by Operations Support Officer teams after that date following the declaration of a state of emergency by the UNRWA Gaza Field Office on 8 July. The Operations Support Officer teams then ceased to operate and their members were assigned to other, emergency-related functions.

55. On 16 July 2015, a 120 mm mortar tube, a mortar bipod and twenty 120 mm mortar-round containers, with ammunition, were discovered under a blanket in a corner of a locked classroom. The weaponry was photographed.

56. UNRWA senior management notified the local authorities in Gaza and asked that the weapons be removed. The United Nations Department of Safety and

Security contacted the Special Protection Unit of the local police and also asked that the weapons be removed; this would presumably be done by the local police explosive ordnance detachment. The Unit asked that the United Nations guarantee that IDF would not strike while the weapons were being removed and that a United Nations vehicle be used to remove the weapons. The Department refused.

57. The Board was informed that UNRWA had received testimony that two individuals identifying themselves as policemen had gone to the school, claimed that they knew who was responsible for the cache of weapons and left a telephone number. Upon being contacted, one of the individuals stated that the weapons would be removed from the school in the early morning. The Board was further informed that, early in the morning of 17 July, the door to the classroom in question was found locked, with no signs of forced entry or exit, and that the weapons had been removed.

58. On 17 July, UNRWA informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel about finding the weapons and their subsequent disappearance. In the afternoon of 17 July, UNRWA issued a press release stating that a cache of approximately 20 rockets (sic) had been found hidden in a vacant school. Under the misapprehension that the explosive ordnance detachment of the local police had removed the weaponry, the press release stated that UNRWA had informed the relevant parties and had successfully taken all measures necessary for the removal of the objects in order to preserve the safety and security of the school.

59. The Board found that, in the light of the situation in the vicinity, the security measures at the school were weak prior to and on the day of the incident, owing partly to the fact that the personnel charged with the school's security were subject to life-threatening circumstances. It also found that an unidentified Palestinian armed group had used the school premises to hide the weaponry.

Incident (i): Presence of weaponry at UNRWA Jabalia Elementary "C" and Ayyobiya Boys School on 22 July 2014

60. Jabalia Elementary "C" and Ayyobiya Boys School is one in a row of five schools situated in an urban area to the east of the Jabalia refugee camp. Behind the school is a large open area with agricultural land used for small-scale farming. The Board was informed that the area was known to be used by armed groups as a site for firing weapons and that it had been targeted by IDF in past conflicts.

61. The school was never identified in the UNRWA emergency management plan as a potential shelter because of security and safety concerns. At the time of the incident, it was in recess for the summer.

62. The Board was informed that of the four school attendants normally employed by the school, three of them were absent at the time of the incident. One school attendant resided at the school but was on leave at the time and, afraid, spent most of his time indoors. In addition, the Board was informed that five guards hired as part of the UNRWA Job Creation Programme had been assigned to the school and were scheduled to work there from evening until morning. However, at the time of the incident, none of them was at the school. The school has one main gate which, the Board was informed, was not usually locked. The school wall is not high enough to prevent intruders from climbing into the school.

63. A team of Operations Support Officers had inspected the school on 12 May as part of the regular inspection programme for all UNRWA facilities described above. No issues had been identified that compromised the neutrality of the premises. No further inspections had been conducted by Operations Support Officer teams after that date for the reasons outlined above.

64. However, following the discovery of weaponry at Gaza Beach Elementary Co-educational "B" School on 16 July, UNRWA management issued an instruction on 17 July that daily inspections should be conducted of all UNRWA schools, including those that were not being used as shelters, to ensure that no weapons were being stored in them and that the premises were not being misused. Two UNRWA staff members were then tasked to conduct daily inspections of all the schools in the area concerned. School attendants present at the schools were instructed to ensure that the daily inspections were conducted. The Board was informed that the school had been inspected on 19 July and that nothing unusual had been found, although not every part of the premises had been checked.

65. The area behind the school wall was known at the time to be used by militants, including for the firing of projectiles. The Board accordingly noted the dangerous nature of the inspection of the premises and found that, although a thorough inspection of the premises should have been conducted, such inspection could have taken place only in the presence of qualified security personnel.

66. On the morning of 22 July, a crowd of approximately 300 persons arrived at the school gate and entered the schoolyard. Heavy shelling was occurring at the time in the area of Beit Hanoun, near Jabalia, and IDF had dropped leaflets over Beit Hanoun warning the civilian population to evacuate the area. This had created a mass movement of people seeking shelter.

67. UNRWA management was alerted to the arrival of the displaced persons and sent an official to the school to ascertain whether it could be opened as a designated emergency shelter. Upon arrival, the official was immediately alerted by the displaced persons to the presence of an object that seemed to be a weapon. Other UNRWA officials then came to the school to inspect the premises. They saw an object that seemed to be a weapon, covered with a piece of cloth, in an area under the cover of some trees behind the toilet block and near the boundary wall separating the school from the open area behind it. No one approached the object to confirm whether it was a weapon. No photographs of it were taken and, for this reason, the Board was unable to confirm with certainty what type of weapon might have been hidden at the school. However, it concluded that it was highly likely that a Palestinian armed group might have used the premises to hide weapons.

68. The area was immediately evacuated and the UNRWA officials went to the neighbouring schools to determine whether any of them would be suitable for sheltering the hundreds of displaced persons who were arriving. About an hour later, they returned to the school, to be informed by the displaced persons that the object had been removed. They then confirmed that the object was no longer at the rear of the school.

69. Following the finding of the object, UNRWA officials contacted the local authorities in Gaza, the Coordination and Liaison Administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel. On the evening of 22 July, UNRWA issued a press release stating that rockets (sic) had been found hidden in a vacant school in Gaza

and that UNRWA was pursuing all possible measures for their removal in order to preserve the safety and security of the school. The Board was informed that, at the time, UNRWA senior officials understood that the suspected weapon or weapons were still at the school. The following morning, the Deputy Commissioner-General informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel of the plan to remove the suspected weapon or weapons. Later that same day, having learned of their disappearance, she informed the Ministry accordingly. The Board found that communications within UNRWA may have been confusing at critical times during the management of the incident. However, it also noted the enormous pressure under which UNRWA staff were operating, often handling multiple complex and life-threatening situations.

70. The Government of Israel showed the Board a video, which the Board concluded was authentic, showing the launching of a projectile from within the school premises on 14 July. The Government also provided a document that was said to identify the places close to the school from which rockets had been launched, together with the dates of those launches. The Board concluded that it was highly likely that an unidentified Palestinian armed group could have used the school premises to launch attacks on or around 14 July.

Incident (j): Presence of weaponry at UNRWA Nuseirat Preparatory Co-educational "B" School on 29 July 2014 and on 17 August 2014

71. UNRWA Nuseirat Preparatory Co-educational "B" School is located in a semi-rural area, north-west of the Nuseirat camp, south of Gaza city. Two houses and a mosque are located less than 1 m from the school wall and an apartment building is less than 100 m away. The school is enclosed by a wall. There is one main gate and a small pedestrian door adjacent to it, and one secondary gate in a side wall.

72. The school was in recess at the time of the incident. It was not used as a designated emergency shelter.

73. The Board was informed that during the recess the main gate was locked, but not the adjacent pedestrian gate. The secondary gate was kept locked. Students would regularly climb up the front wall to enter the school. At the time of the incident, none of the classrooms were locked.

74. The school had only two attendants, who worked the morning shift on alternate days. One was not present on some days because of the security situation and the shelling. In addition, five guards hired as part of the UNRWA Job Creation Programme were assigned to the school, one on the afternoon shift and the others, in pairs, on the night shift. There was evidence that, on several occasions, including on the day of the incident, the Job Creation Programme guards were not present at the school when the school attendant arrived in the morning.

75. A team of Operations Support Officers had inspected the school on 19 May as part of the regular inspection programme for all UNRWA facilities described above. The team reported no weapons or signs of militant activity. No further inspections had been conducted by Operations Support Officer teams after that date for the reasons set out above. Upon the discovery of weapons at Gaza Beach Elementary Co-educational "B" School on 16 July, the school attendants were instructed to inspect the school daily. However, the Board was informed that one of the

attendants did not do so. The last inspection was carried out on 27 July. The day after was Eid al-Fitr and there was no school attendant at the school, though the Job Creation Programme guards were present.

76. On 29 July, a 120 mm mortar tube, a 120 mm mortar bipod and three 120 mm mortar containers were found, covered by a blanket, behind a locked internal gate leading to a stairwell. The weapons were photographed.

77. The same day, UNRWA officials informed the Israeli authorities and the local authorities in Gaza. In accordance with guidance provided by United Nations Headquarters, a mission was arranged for later that day to verify the presence of the weapons and render them safe. However, it was later called off because of the security situation in the vicinity of the school. In the evening, UNRWA issued a press release reporting that rockets (sic) had been found in an UNRWA school, that all parties had been informed and that United Nations munitions experts had been unable to access the school because of the security situation but would do so once it had improved.

78. On 30 July, UNRWA officials went to the school, ahead of a visit by United Nations munitions experts. They found no school attendants or Job Creation Programme guards at the premises; the lock on the gate to the stairwell had been broken and the weapons had disappeared.

79. The Board was informed that, between 30 July and 17 August, security at the school may have been compromised on at least one occasion by the presence of unidentified individuals and, possibly, of mortar weaponry.

80. On 17 August, a 120 mm mortar tube, a 120 mm mortar bipod and twenty 120 mm mortar containers were found in a small room under a stairwell. Water, lubricant-oil bottles and boards apparently used as beds were also found as well as a blackboard with Arabic writing, seemingly depicting military operations. At the rear of the school, a mortar base plate was found embedded in the sand. The items were photographed. The mortar cases, mortar tube, bipod and base plate were removed from the school and rendered safe.

81. The Board was informed that UNRWA officials contacted the Israeli authorities and explained that the weapons were in the possession of the United Nations and that they would not be handed over to any party. The Deputy Prime Minister of the Palestinian Government of National Consensus was also informed.

82. The Board found that, in the light of the security situation around the school at the time, the security measures at the school were weak, both prior to and on the days of the two incidents, owing partly to the fact that the personnel charged with security at the school were subject to life-threatening circumstances. The Board also found that the presence of weapons and other evidence found in the school indicated that the premises could have been used for an unknown period of time by members of a Palestinian armed group and that it was likely that such a group may have fired the mortar from within the premises of the school.

Safety and security challenges

83. The Board considered that the infrastructure of some UNRWA schools, particularly those built years ago, were unsuited to the general security situation in Gaza. Some schools had low perimeter walls, for example, that could permit

individuals to gain unauthorized access. The Board was informed that while a programme for school improvements existed, it did not include any standards with respect to the minimum height of fences or boundary walls and no construction standards that might limit opportunities for unauthorized access. The Board further noted that arrangements relating to the securing and locking of entrance gates outside working hours and during recess did not always function efficiently. It was not always clear, for example, how the keys were kept and by whom.

84. The Board was informed that UNRWA had only 237 guards serving on staff contracts to provide security for all UNRWA installations. To assist in maintaining security during the conflict, the UNRWA Gaza Field Office consequently recruited local workers through its Job Creation Programme. The recruits had no prior security training and the training provided to them upon their recruitment was minimal. They were retained on three-month contracts with no expectation of renewal. The Board was told that additional funding had been sought to convert those contracts into staff contracts, but that the request had apparently been rejected. As at the end of November 2014, 897 guards had been hired under the Job Creation Programme.

85. The Board noted that the security of UNRWA premises, particularly during times of conflict, is a matter of paramount importance that needs to be addressed seriously. In relying upon the Job Creation Programme, UNRWA was entrusting one of the most dangerous and fundamental functions to low-paid individuals with no training in security and no expectation of continued employment. The Board considered that a task bearing such a high level of responsibility requires specialized and properly trained individuals.

86. The Board further noted that Job Creation Programme guards typically work afternoon and night shifts; no guards are therefore on duty in the mornings. The function of securing schools during that time is assumed by school attendants, whose primary task is to maintain the cleanliness of the schools, not their security. Like Job Creation Programme guards, school attendants are not trained to deal with security issues. They also report to a different authority from the one to which the Job Creation Programme guards report. The Board considered that the existence of two reporting lines for the performance of the same task was bound to lead to confusion, particularly in times of crisis.

87. The Board noted that UNRWA has no standard operating procedures articulating the duty of all staff members to report security incidents and the modalities for doing so. Witnesses informed the Board that there was no list of staff who should be informed of incidents, no lists of actions to be taken in the event of specific situations and no central mechanism for keeping a log of all events. As such, the transmission of information and the assignment of required actions were somewhat ad hoc, negatively affecting the ability of UNRWA to establish facts and account for actions taken and to be taken.

88. The Board further found that UNRWA did not have a policy or standard operating procedures to address situations involving the unauthorized presence of weapons on UNRWA premises. After the disappearance of weapons from UNRWA Jabalia Elementary "C" and Ayyobiya Boys School on 22 July, United Nations Headquarters suggested a procedure to be followed. Those suggestions have yet to be "operationalized" through the issuance of detailed standard operating procedures. The Board also noted that there was no reference document setting out security

levels, standards for the identification and evaluation of security risks and mitigation measures that need to be in place for UNRWA premises, including its schools.

89. The Board was informed that, during normal times, UNRWA carries out unannounced inspections of UNRWA facilities, including schools, to ensure their neutrality, with each facility being visited at least once every four months. These visits are carried out by teams of Operations Support Officers. Each team includes an international staff member. These inspections were discontinued during the conflict and the international staff members were regarded as non-essential staff.

90. The Board concluded that, during the conflict, UNRWA was operating in Gaza with an understaffed Safety and Security Division, which struggled to secure hundreds of premises with unskilled personnel. The Board considered that priority should be given to enabling the UNRWA Gaza Field Office to obtain appropriate resources so as to improve security at UNRWA schools and other UNRWA installations in the Gaza Strip, and that this should include resources for the recruitment and training of the required number of guards, on staff contracts, to secure its schools and other installations under a shift system operating 24/7. The Board also considered that, as a matter of priority, UNRWA should reconsider its security approach in relation to its schools and other installations, both in the context of emergency situations and during normal operations, and revisit its school inspection systems, including during emergencies.

Communication and coordination issues

91. The Board noted that humanitarian response and continued operations of United Nations entities in Gaza during Operation Protective Edge required the coordination of the following functions: ensuring that IDF were aware of all United Nations installations, in particular those in use as designated emergency shelters; coordinating movements of United Nations personnel within Gaza and into and out of Israel; coordinating pauses in hostilities for humanitarian activities such as food deliveries; and coordinating the entry of humanitarian assistance into, and its distribution within, the Gaza Strip.

92. The Board found that the United Nations took a considerable number of measures to ensure the proper coordination of these functions. Unlike the situation in 2009 during Operation Cast Lead, efforts were made to deploy staff with the skills necessary to operate during armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies. The Organization had also built up the capacity of the inter-agency Access Coordination Unit, which had established relations with IDF at various levels prior to the conflict. However, key personnel were unable to organize in a manner that was sustainable for a prolonged emergency, owing to the relatively small numbers of international staff available to assume managerial emergency functions, the unexpectedly long duration of the conflict and the demands put upon staff in terms of caring for displaced persons and the shelters. The Board also noted that new emergency management systems had been introduced by the humanitarian country team and by the UNRWA Gaza Field Office in June 2014 and that no proper training had been conducted on them prior to Operation Protective Edge.

93. The Board found that, at times, there were multiple channels of communication, both within the United Nations and with outside interlocutors. While this could be helpful, it could also lead to misunderstandings. The Board also

found that the existence of two United Nations emergency operations rooms, one organized and coordinated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the other by UNRWA, could lead to confusion, even though they carried out distinct functions that were clear to United Nations actors on the ground.

94. The establishment of a joint coordination room, bringing together the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, the United Nations and ICRC, had contributed significantly to the coordination of United Nations activities in Gaza.

95. The Government of Israel had endeavoured to improve its internal structures of communication between the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories and IDF units. The Board could not properly assess internal coordination structures within IDF, but was briefed on all the mechanisms and measures to ensure that fighting troops were aware of sensitive sites as well as of the humanitarian situation and needs. All coordinates of United Nations installations were available to units on the ground and were clearly and visibly marked on maps. The Board noted, however, that, in spite of such measures, UNRWA facilities were hit.

96. While they were channelled by the United Nations to IDF in a timely manner, the Board sensed a degree of confusion concerning the names and coordinates of installations: on one occasion, IDF and the United Nations used different map references, and some schools have multiple names. In this regard, the Board welcomed the news that UNRWA and the Israeli Coordination and Liaison Administration intended to refer to installations in the future by numbers rather than names.

Recommendations

97. The terms of reference of the Board included making recommendations concerning any action that, in its opinion, should be taken by the United Nations, including actions or measures to avoid recurrence of the incidents. The Board made the following recommendations.

Regarding safety and security

98. In the light of its findings, noted above, on issues of safety and security, the Board recommended that:

(a) The United Nations should consider sending a team of experts to review the entire UNRWA security management system, with particular emphasis on conducting a detailed risk assessment for UNRWA operations in normal circumstances as well as in emergencies. The team should focus, inter alia, on the functioning of emergency operations rooms and the procedures for reporting incidents and on assisting in the review of security-related guidance documents applicable to UNRWA staff and premises. The team should also consider how to benefit from the standard-setting role of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security in addressing the safety and security challenges identified in the Board's report;

(b) The Office of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA should consolidate existing practices on neutrality into a framework document to ensure a consistent and coherent approach, agency-wide. This framework document should take into consideration staff neutrality, premises/installations and assets, such as vehicles, and

operations. It should also outline the roles and responsibilities for various aspects of neutrality, including approval, review and maintenance of relevant documentation. The mechanism for monitoring and handling of neutrality-related incidents should also be described;

(c) To improve the security of its schools and other installations in Gaza, UNRWA should consider developing standard guidelines inspired by the Organization's minimum operating security standards system. It should also consider increasing the number of guards serving on fixed-term appointments and enhance the training of an effective guard force, managed in shifts on a 24/7 basis;

(d) To assist the senior management in the UNWRA Field Office in Gaza to address issues of weapons, ammunition, unexploded ordnance and explosives found on United Nations premises, a weapons/ammunition and explosive expert should be posted permanently at the UNWRA Gaza Field Office;

(e) UNRWA should: develop agency-specific implementation plans for addressing situations in which weapons are discovered and their subsequent handling, taking into consideration agency-specific needs and the operating realities of each field office; assign roles and responsibilities for carrying out these tasks; and ensure that staff are properly trained;

(f) UNRWA should operationalize the guidance provided by United Nations Headquarters on the handling of incidents involving weapons found in UNRWA facilities by drafting standard operating procedures that incorporate actions and responsibilities of staff, with clear lines of accountability, and mitigation measures with regard to the security of the UNRWA personnel concerned;

(g) UNRWA should consider changing the inspection process for UNRWA installations and strengthen the inspection regime by establishing an objective and effective inspection regime by international staff members such as Operations Support Officers, who should be in office during normal times as well as during times of conflict and who should be regarded as essential staff during emergencies. As for the quarterly inspections by Operations Support Officer teams, detailed guidelines should be designed to enhance institutional memory. Those procedures should clearly state the roles and responsibilities of each UNRWA staff member involved in the inspection process as well its monitoring;

(h) UNRWA should provide to its personnel tasked with managing shelters training on post-emergency confirmation of casualties and deaths caused during incidents occurring on its premises. It should also train personnel or recruit personnel with knowledge of how to conduct forensic investigations and collect evidence.

Regarding communication and coordination

99. In the light of its findings, noted above, on issues of communication and coordination, as well as information on issues related to coordination of emergency response during Operation Cast Lead in 2009, the Board recommended that:

(a) The United Nations should request the Government of Israel to further strengthen internal mechanisms, especially those within IDF, so as to ensure that United Nations personnel, operations and premises are not put at risk in the event of any future military operations affecting Gaza. The United Nations should further

request the Government of Israel to establish a hotline for emergency coordination between the Director of Operations of UNRWA and the Commander of the IDF Southern Command. This would support the high-level coordination focal point, to whom the United Nations conveys the problems which it believes need to be addressed in respect of coordination and clearance arrangements in order to ensure the security of all United Nations personnel and premises and the safe continuation of United Nations operations, in Gaza;

(b) The United Nations should request the Government of Israel to give a commitment that, at any time that it believes it has information that United Nations premises have been misused for military purposes or that UNRWA staff are involved in militant activities, such information will be promptly conveyed in strict confidence to the senior management of UNRWA or other United Nations entity, so that they can fulfil their responsibilities to investigate and take whatever action they may deem appropriate;

(c) The United Nations should request the Government of Israel to give a commitment that, in the event that it plans any future military operation in proximity to United Nations premises, it will provide advance warning, sufficient to enable the United Nations to ensure the security and safety of its personnel or other civilians attending its facilities, and ensure that coordinating procedures are such that confusion or misunderstandings concerning UNRWA as well as other United Nations installations are excluded;

(d) With regard to coordination with IDF and building on positive steps already undertaken, the United Nations should continue to cultivate relations with the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories and IDF at various levels. The capacity of the Organization's inter-agency Access Coordination Unit should be increased and coordinating structures changed in order to allow it to fulfil the role of primary United Nations focal point with the Israeli Coordination and Liaison Administration, augmented by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security and the UNRWA Safety and Security Division as required;

(e) The Secretary-General should send a team of experts to assess coordination structures in Gaza between the United Nations, non-United Nations entities and the Government of Israel and to assess and advise how command and control procedures within UNWRA and with external actors can be improved and strengthened. The assessment and advice should include the set-up, staffing and training of a joint operations room in the United Nations Department of Safety and Security and the Safety and Security Division of UNWRA;

(f) UNRWA and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should make efforts to avoid establishing two parallel structures in Gaza during emergencies. There should be one joint structure in charge of all United Nations emergency response in Gaza. Appropriate arrangements for co-location of all relevant United Nations staff during emergencies should also be made;

(g) The United Nations Department of Safety and Security senior management team should be reinforced as soon as possible;

(h) The United Nations should earmark a few military experts on mission in existing peacekeeping missions in the Middle East to augment the UNRWA Gaza Field Office and support UNRWA as duty officers in a joint operations room during crises. Regular exercises with area operations rooms should be organized;

(i) With regard to emergency management, the United Nations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory should introduce and regularly conduct inter-agency training sessions and drills for staff expected to be involved in the coordination of United Nations operations. Staff should be identified for these tasks and be fully aware of their expected responsibilities as well as those of others. Area Chiefs should receive further training on security matters and how to manage their operations rooms in a professional manner. Area operations rooms should be prepared, equipped and trained for emergency security situations by a United Nations mobile training team.

Regarding general issues

100. The Board made the following general recommendations:

- The mandate of UNRWA is essentially humanitarian in nature. UNRWA conducts its activities through programmes in education, health, relief and social services. Its staff should not be involved in issues of weaponry, ammunition and unexploded ordnance, nor should it have to collect shrapnel from schools. It requires the further assistance of qualified and experienced personnel, preferably with a military background, to support its staff.
- UNRWA international staff and senior local staff should as a matter of urgency receive counselling to address potential post-traumatic stress disorder. These staff members have gone through very stressful events for a prolonged period of time.